

The Art of Communication (6-12) - Two Lessons

Overview:

Students will use images from the exhibition *Southern Accent: Seeking the American South in Contemporary Art* to practice using visual art elements and narrative to describe an artwork. Students will create an artistic interpretation from a written description.

Lesson One:

Begin by projecting an image from the exhibition *Southern Accent*. Lead the students in a short visual discussion by asking:

- What's going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?



Andy Warhol, *Dolly Parton*, 1985. Synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on canvas; 42 x 42 inches (106.7 x 106.7 cm). Collection of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, 2010.11. Image courtesy of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, New York. © 2015 The Andy Warhol Foundation

Next, using another image from the exhibition, lead the class in creating a detailed description of the artwork using visual art elements and principles. You may reference the “Elements of Art” sheet in this packet.

Then, lead the class in creating a narrative description of the work.

Next, divide the class into two halves. Distribute printouts of art from *Southern Accent* (a different set for each half). Ask each student to select one piece of art to create a written description. The description should use both elements and principles and a narrative. Instruct students to include as much detail as possible.

Lesson Two:

First, without students seeing the original artworks used by the opposite group, distribute the written descriptions to students in the opposite group. Have students draw the artwork based on the description provided. Encourage the students to include all of the details from the written description.

Next, have students compare the resulting artworks, descriptions, and original artwork.

Finally, discuss the process as a class.

- **Was it difficult, or easy?**
- **What were some of the challenges?**
- **Was it easier describing the artwork or creating work from the description?**
- **How accurate was the finished drawing when compared to the original?**

7 Formal Elements of Visual Art

Color

- Produced by light of various wavelengths, and when light strikes an object and reflects back to the eyes.
- An element of art with three properties:
 - (1) hue or tint, the color name, e.g., red, yellow, blue, etc.:
 - (2) intensity, the purity and strength of a color, e.g., bright red or dull red; and
 - (3) value, the lightness or darkness of a color.
- When the spectrum is organized as a color wheel, the colors are divided into groups called primary, secondary and intermediate (or tertiary) colors; analogous and complementary, and also as warm and cool colors.
- Colors can be objectively described as saturated, clear, cool, warm, deep, subdued, grayed, tawny, mat, glossy, monochrome, multicolored, particolored, variegated, or polychromed.
- Some words used to describe colors are more subjective (subject to personal opinion or taste), such as: exciting, sweet, saccharine, brash, garish, ugly, beautiful, cute, fashionable, pretty, and sublime.

Value

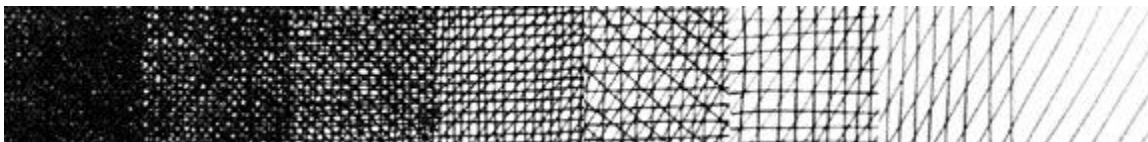
- An element of art that refers to luminance or luminosity -- the lightness or darkness of a color. Value is an especially important element in works of art when color is absent. This is particularly likely with drawings, woodcuts, lithographs, and photographs. It is also true with most sculpture and architecture.
- Below and in the background: a value scale employing a smoothly nuanced gradation of values.



- Below: a value scale -- or gray scale -- in eight stepped grades of values.



- And another stepped scale produced by hatching and cross-hatching.



- A full range of values can also be produced by a variety of other means. These include hatching and stipple techniques, as well as with textures and patterns of other sorts.
- Changes in value, whether sudden or gradual, can add greatly to the visual impact of art forms. Changes in value can also be used to help the artist express an idea.

Space

- An element of art that refers to the distance or area between, around, above, below, or within things. It can be described as two-dimensional or three-dimensional; as flat, shallow, or deep; as open or closed; as positive or negative; and as actual, ambiguous, or illusory.

Line

- A mark with length and direction(-s).
- An element of art which refers to the continuous mark made on some surface by a moving point. Types of line include: vertical, horizontal, diagonal, straight or ruled, curved, bent, angular, thin, thick or wide, interrupted (dotted, dashed, broken, etc.), blurred or fuzzy, controlled, freehand, parallel, hatching, meandering, and spiraling.
- Often it defines a space, and may create an outline or contour, define a silhouette; create patterns, or movement, and the illusion of mass or volume. It may be two-dimensional (as with pencil on paper) three-dimensional (as with wire) or implied (the edge of a shape or form).

Shape

- Is an enclosed space defined and determined by other art elements such as line, color, value, and texture.
- In painting and drawing, shapes may take on the appearance of solid three-dimensional object even though they are limited to two dimensions — length and width. This two-dimensional character of shape distinguishes it from form, which has depth as well as length and width.
- Examples of shapes include: circle, oval, and oblong; polygons such as triangle, square, rectangle, rhombus, trapezium, trapezoid, pentagon, hexagon, heptagon, octagon, nonagon, decagon, undecagon, dodecagon, etc.; and such other kinds of shapes as amorphous, biomorphous, and concretion.

Form

- In its widest sense, total structure; a synthesis of all the visible aspects of that structure and of the manner in which they are united to create its distinctive character. The form of a work is what enables us to perceive it.
- Form also refers to an element of art that is three-dimensional (height, width, and depth) and encloses volume. For example, a triangle, which is two-dimensional, is a shape, but a pyramid, which is three-dimensional, is a form. Cubes, spheres, ovoids, pyramids, cone, and cylinders are examples of various forms.
- Also, all of the elements of a work of art independent of their meaning. Formal elements are primary features which are not a matter of semantic significance — including color, dimensions, line, mass, medium, scale, shape, space, texture, value; and the principles of design under which they are placed — including balance, contrast, dominance, harmony, movement, proportion, proximity, rhythm, similarity, unity, and variety.

Texture

- An element of art, texture is the surface quality or "feel" of an object, its smoothness, roughness, softness, etc. Textures may be actual or simulated. Actual textures can be felt with the fingers, while simulated textures are suggested by an artist in the painting of different areas of a picture — often in representing drapery, metals, rocks, hair, etc.
- Words describing textures include: flat, smooth (third row, right), shiny, glossy, glittery, velvety, feathery, soft, wet, gooey, furry, sandy, leathery (second row, right), crackled (upper left), prickly, abrasive, rough (first row, right), furry, bumpy, corrugated (second row, left), puffy (second row, third), rusty (third row, second), and slimey (third row, third).